



**Educate, Participate, Motivate**

## **TIPS FOR TEENS**

### **Practice, practice, practice**

Driving is a skill and like any other skill, whether it is playing basketball, learning a musical instrument or mastering a video game – it takes practice to get good.

### **Take the task of learning to drive a car seriously**

The biggest risk facing teens is not drugs or alcohol, HIV, school violence or suicide – its motor vehicle crashes. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15 to 20 year olds.

### **Learn to drive in a variety of situations in a variety of places**

Learning how to drive from your house to school does not mean you know how to drive. Your entire driving career will not be spent on neighborhood roads so you need to practice on busy city streets, in shopping centers, on highways and freeways, at night and especially during inclement weather.

### **Insist on having an experienced adult practice with you**

While you might think it would be more fun to have a friend practice with you, a friend is probably not much more experienced than you are. They won't be able to offer you suggestions on how to safely handle situations that occur when driving.

### **Eliminate distractions while learning to drive**

Lapses of attention are the largest single contributing factor in teen crashes. According to the US Department of Transportation, lapses in driver attention have been identified as a contributing factor in at least 25% of all traffic crashes. If you take your eyes off the road for no more than three or four seconds, at 55 miles per hour, your vehicle has traveled the length of a football field.

### **Learn to manage distractions once you have more experience**

One of the most important things drivers can do is learn to safely manage distractions. Pre-set climate controls, radio, CD player and identify the location of signals, wipers and lights in the vehicle. Plan your route and take care of personal grooming before you drive. If a passenger is distracting you, pull over where it is safe and legal to do so. Don't start driving until the situation is under control. When you are hungry or thirsty, take a break.

None of us should talk on a cell phone while driving. The equipment is not the issue, it's the distraction caused by focusing attention on the conversation. If you must answer a call, try to pull out of traffic to do so; if you can't, tell the caller you are driving and will return the call as soon as you arrive at your destination.

### **Never drink and drive or ride with a drinking driver**

All 50 states and the District of Columbia have a zero tolerance alcohol policy for youth under 21. Yet, in 2002, 24% of 15-20 year old drivers in fatal crashes were intoxicated.

### **Always wear your safety belt**

Safety belts, when worn, reduce the risk of death by 45% and serious injury to front seat occupants by 50%.

### **Drive at a safe speed**

Thirty-seven (37%) of 16 year old drivers in fatal crashes were speeding. Remember, the faster you drive, the more difficult it is to correct an error and control the vehicle.